Family Activity: Family Portrait
Provided by the Art Institute of Chicago Department of Museum Education

Introduction
Jan Steen’s painting shows a family relaxing and making music together. Members of the family sit around a table playing instruments. The view of a windmill outside the window and the vines creeping in, tell us that it is spring or summer in the Netherlands. Gold and richly colored materials inside the house tell us that this family paid careful attention to how they decorated their home.

Discussion Questions
Look carefully at Steen’s picture.

• How many people are in the painting? What are they each doing?
• What kinds of household items do you see?
• How many animals are there? How many chairs? Instruments?
• Can you find any of these objects in your own home?
• What do you think life was like for this family who lived 300 years ago?

Activity
Make your own family portrait in a room in your home.

Materials Needed:
• Paper
• Pencils, crayons, or paints

Steps:
1. Sit in a room in your home and make a list of the objects and materials you see. Don’t forget to include what you see and what time of year it is.
2. Think of an activity that you and your family do together in this room.
3. Using pens, pencils, crayons, or paints, create a portrait of your family engaged in this activity. What objects will you include? What will each member of your family be doing?